

‘Thank goodness that’s over,’ said Sarah as the TARDIS door buzzed shut. ‘I never want to see a pack of playing cards again as long as I live.’

‘I’m afraid it’s not quite over, my dear,’ said the Doctor. ‘There’s still the little matter of a good spanking I owe you.’

Sarah blanched. ‘But, Doctor, you don’t actually mean to go through with that, do you?’

‘There’s no choice, Sarah Jane. It was very cunning of the Toymaker to make us play against one another. And, anyway, can you honestly say you don’t deserve it?’

He had a point, she thought: it *was* her fault they had gotten into this situation to begin with. Not that she’d really known what she was letting them in for when she hit the ‘reply’ button on the TARDIS communications unit. It couldn’t do any harm, she had thought, and they badly needed some fun after their experiences on the planet Exxilon. It was only afterwards that she heard from the Doctor about ‘celestial spam’ and the dangers of giving away your position in time and space.

‘He’s waited centuries to find me,’ explained the Doctor. ‘Now we’ll just have to see if the old TARDIS can outrun him!’ He rushed around the console, pulling levers and switches in a flurry of lace cuffs.

The TARDIS lurched, depositing Sarah unceremoniously onto the floor. She struggled to her feet, gingerly rubbing her bottom as she tried to keep her balance. ‘What happens if we get caught?’ she asked.

‘Games,’ said the Doctor. ‘But no fun. And if we lose, we’ll become his slaves for all eternity.’

The TARDIS wheezed and groaned with the effort as the Doctor pushed its circuits to the limits of endurance. Gradually the machine ground itself into a painful silence: not even the incessant electronic hum of the equipment could be heard. Then out of the air came the crisp voice of the Toymaker: ‘At last I’ve found you, Doctor. Come outside, please. There is a game waiting for you to play.’

‘Why don’t we just sit tight in here?’ suggested Sarah. ‘He can’t keep us

here forever.'

'That's exactly what he can do,' replied the Doctor, hoisting his tweed cape onto his shoulders. 'Now we're caught, we have no alternative: we have to play whatever game he has waiting for us. And, remember, at all costs we have to win.'

The Toymaker gestured them across to a kidney-shaped table covered with green baize. 'A game of skill and chance,' he said, fanning out a deck of cards. 'Poker. The house deals. You play. If you lose, Doctor...' He waved at a video screen set into the chest of a huge toy robot. Slowly an image resolved itself: the Doctor, running desperately for the TARDIS, only to see a steel portcullis crash down between him and his ship. 'As you can see. If you lose, your TARDIS will be taken from you. And if you lose, Miss...'

'Smith,' said Sarah, shuddering at the uncomfortable feeling of an outsider's mind poking around her memories. What would be the worst that could happen to her? With a sickly feeling, she realized she knew: the ultimate punishment of her childhood, more feared than any other. It had last happened to her six years ago, when she was seventeen, after she tried to sell some of her Aunt Lavinia's research to the Sunday papers. The editor sent the material back to her aunt, Sarah was sent to her room, and ... well, she couldn't sit down for the next week.

She snapped awake as the image of her thoughts appeared on the memory screen before her eyes: her teenage self, squealing and squirming over her father's knee as his palm exacted rough justice across the trim white seat of her panties.

'So, now you both know what you're playing for,' said the Toymaker as he began to deal the cards. A pile of curiously shaped blue poker chips materialized beside each player. Sarah reached for her cards, registering their smooth, plastic texture as she drew them towards her. She felt a glow of inner action to see she had a picture card, but her poker face slipped into all-too-visible surprise when the knave turned his head towards her and stuck out his tongue.

If the Doctor had any similarly animated cards in his hand, it didn't show in his expression. But as the game went on, the cards' outrageous antics ruined Sarah's concentration. Hand by hand she risked chip after chip,

while the Doctor seemed to pay scant attention to the game, preoccupied instead with his own growing heap as he piled one blue chip on top of another. Yet still he kept on winning.

Sarah gambled her last, and lost. Slowly the Doctor laid out his hand card by card to form a royal flush, and pulled the remaining chips towards him. 'It's very interesting, Sarah,' he said. 'These seem to be pieces of a three-dimensional jigsaw puzzle. And if I'm right...'

Sarah wasn't listening. All her attention was on the Doctor's cards. The King of Hearts had climbed out of his own card, and seemed to be remonstrating with the Queen. Finally he turned her over his knee, raised her patterned dress, and began to spank her bare bottom.

'I *am* right,' said the Doctor, and Sarah tore herself away from the awful fascination of the silent cartoon chastisement on the table in front of her. The Doctor had assembled the poker chips into an elegant scale model of a police box. 'Pull to open,' he said, and did so. Inside he found the key to the TARDIS.

The Toymaker scowled. 'We shall meet again,' he said as the Doctor took Sarah by the hand and led her across to his ship. 'Perhaps sooner than you expect.'

'But now we've got the TARDIS back,' insisted Sarah, 'why don't we just hightail it out of here?'

'Because both of us gambled and one of us lost,' explained the Doctor patiently. He twiddled a few unresponsive switches to illustrate his point. 'The Toymaker will only release the TARDIS when you've paid your debt. So shall we get on with it?'

'Give me a moment to put a book down my pants,' said Sarah. 'I'm sorry, my dear, but that won't be possible,' he said, pulling up a straightbacked chair. 'Games have rules, even the Toymaker's: it doesn't do to cheat. This will have to be a real spanking, and what's more it will have to be done as the memory window showed us. So if you'd like to make yourself ready.' He gestured to the fastening at the waist of her tight grey velveteen pants.

Sarah froze with horror, but knew it was no good arguing. Reluctantly her fingers fumbled with the button, drew down the zipper and loosened her pants. The garment dropped to her knees and bunched around the top of her boots, and she stood there in her colorful floral panties, blushing a beet red at the revelation of her most intimate garment. The Doctor appeared indifferent to her exposure as he took her by the shoulders and impassively swept her off her feet and across his knee.

‘Now, Sarah Jane,’ he said, ‘this is going to hurt me more than it hurts you.’ Sarah winced at the hated phrase, then let out an uncontrollable yelp as the Doctor’s palm slapped down across the flowers that decorated her wriggling polyester bottom.

SMACK! ‘Ouch!’ With her feet off the ground and the Doctor’s other hand pressed firmly on the small of her back, Sarah was quite helpless, but as the spanking continued she kicked her bare legs and waved her fists anyway.

PLAP! ‘Yeowww!’ Her bottom vibrated with each smack, and a deepening pink flush began to appear on the curving skin next to her panties’ scalloped edging.

SMACK! ‘Ooooooh!’ The explosive slaps mixed with whoops of distress as the noise echoed around the control room.

PLAP! ‘Owwwwww!’ Her bare thighs thrashed, their scissor motion inhibited only by the velvet pants crumpled round her knees.

At last, the spanking came to an end, and the Doctor set Sarah on her feet. She hitched up her pants over her sizzling bottom and tried to make her exit into the heart of the TARDIS as dignified as she could manage in the circumstances.

The Doctor frowned, then cocked his head and snapped his fingers. ‘Come on, come on,’ he said to the empty air. ‘I’ve played your game and won, Toymaker. You have no choice but to release me!’

The scanner screen slowly resolved into an image of the Toymaker’s grinning face. ‘Alas, Doctor, you have paid too little attention to the rules. You saw the unfortunate Miss Smith’s fate on my memory screen. It was up to you to mete it out, exactly as she remembered it. Smack for smack,

Doctor. But you gave her too many.' The Doctor muttered an obscure Venusian curse under his breath. 'Never mind, Doctor,' continued the Toymaker. 'Losers should always have a reasonable chance to pay their gambling debts. Shall we say three attempts?'

The screen plinked into inactivity as Sarah returned to the control room, freshly scrubbed and changed into a pretty dress. She was starting to feel human again after her humiliating experience.

'Ah, Sarah,' said the Doctor, rubbing the back of his neck in embarrassment. 'I'm afraid I have some bad news for you.'